

LTTE seeks India's help for talks with Colombo

By D.B.S. Jeyaraj

TORONTO, JAN. 7. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) wants the Government of India to help it conduct direct negotiations aimed at resolving the protracted ethnic conflict with the Sri Lankan Government of the Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, informed Tamil sources in Europe said today.

According to these sources, the LTTE requires Indian assistance in two phases. First, it wants New Delhi to allow its political adviser and chief negotiator, Anton Balasingham, and spouse, Adele Anne, to reside temporarily in Chennai before and during talks with the Sri Lankan Government.

Second, it wants India to extend its good offices further and let the talks facilitated by Norway to be conducted in a South Indian city such as Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram or Bangalore.

The Tigers are also amenable to Indian officials' presence as non-participant observers during discussions with Colombo if and when talks commence in India.

It is reliably learnt that the formal request for the Balasinghams to reside in Chennai would be made initially and the second would be predicated on whether a positive response is obtained first.

If granted, Mr. Balasingham would relocate to Chennai, engage in spadework necessary to set up direct talks and then ask for an Indian venue to conduct direct negotiations.

Informed sources said that the LTTE's thinking on these issues had been conveyed to the mutually-accepted facilitator when a Norwegian delegation led by the Deputy Foreign Minister, Vidar Helgesen, met Mr. Balasingham in London on January 4.

It is expected that Oslo would communicate on the matter with Colombo first and, depending upon the Sri Lankan response, would interact with New Delhi. A Norwegian team is scheduled to visit Sri Lanka on January 10.

Tamil circles explained that it was necessary for Mr. Balasingham to meet the LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, for a series of confidential meetings before the decks are cleared for direct Govt.-LTTE talks.

The 63-year-old diabetic is recovering from a kidney transplant and requires sensitive medical care unavailable in the Northern mainland of the Vanni where the LTTE hierarchy is based. This prevents him from residing for long in the Vanni. Commuting from London, where he is based now, to the Vanni via Colombo regularly is physically debilitating and also a security risk.

The Tigers feel that Mr. Balasingham could shuttle back and forth from Chennai to the Vanni by helicopter. Likewise, the LTTE does not want its high-powered delegation attending anticipated direct talks to be vulnerable security-wise by travelling through Colombo to a Western city.

The LTTE team will also have to report back regularly to the Vanni and consult the leadership as talks progress. This logistical requirement and Mr. Balasingham's presence in Chennai makes an Indian city more desirable as a venue for talks.

The LTTE is apparently optimistic that its requests would be granted as India has pledged full support for a negotiated peace in Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan Government is also not averse to a greater Indian role in the talks.

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Let's bury the past, LTTE tells India

9² in
S Lanka

By Nirupama Subramanian

COLOMBO, FEB. 3. Continuing the campaign to woo India, top leaders of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have told a Tamil daily here that the two sides must bury the past and move ahead by forging an understanding based on "mutual interest."

"If the U.S. and Russia can cooperate with each other, so can India and the LTTE," an unnamed senior leader of the Tigers was quoted as saying by *Suderoi*. Projecting the LTTE point of view, the paper reported a "deep-seated and genuine" desire among the top leaders of the group to repair relations with India, and quoted some by name.

"It is not events or incidents, but an absence of mutual understanding that is the main reason for the differences between the LTTE and India," Pottu Amman, intelligence wing leader of the LTTE, and second accused in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, is reported to have said.

He added that there were now opportunities to build such an understanding and gave the impression that India had already made overtures to the LTTE.

"Instead of sending signals to the intelligence unit for such an understanding, it would be better if these signals are sent to the political wing."

The newspaper added that Pottu Amman did not elaborate. "Let us forget the bitterness of the past. Both sides have done good and bad," he said.

The LTTE recently demanded that India permit its senior member, Anton Balasingham, to live in Chennai, and that peace talks between the LTTE and Colombo be held in a south Indian city.

Both Pottu Amman and the political wing leader, S. P. Thamilselvan, have been quoted in a detailed article as forcefully rejecting the theory that the LTTE was attempting to move closer to India as it did not want the regional superpower to be antagonistic to it. "All world powers, including India, know how fiercely the LTTE will resist any action that goes against the interests of the people."

It was wrong to think that the LTTE wanted to revive its ties with India out of fear, they said. "We have no fear and we are not looking for a one-sided relationship based on fear. What we want is an understanding based on mutual interest." While the

LTTE proposal for locating Mr. Balasingham and the peace talks in India have met with opposition from several Indian political parties, commentators arguing in favour of it have forwarded "geo-political sensitivities" as one of the reasons why New Delhi should not dismiss it out of hand. They have argued that this would allow India to retain a say. Another argument, forwarded in *The Sunday Leader* today by a Tamil columnist was that India's refusal to grant a venue could, at some stage, become an obstacle to the peace process.

Bail for Chandrika's bodyguard

COLOMBO, FEB. 3. The Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunga's top bodyguard was released on bail today by a magistrate hearing an alleged plot to kill one of the main political opponents of the leader, police said.

Ms. Kumaratunga's closest bodyguard, Police Superintendent, Nihal Karunaratne, surrendered before the Chief Magistrate in Kandy today, five days after the judge issued a warrant for his arrest. — AFP

THE HINDU

4 FEB 2002

'Allow LTTE talks in India'

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, JAN. 31. With the Tamil Nadu Government stoutly opposing any move to allow the outlawed LTTE to hold peace talks with the Sri Lankan Government in Chennai, the pro-LTTE groups in the State rallied together here to urge India to assist the negotiations.

Hailing the LTTE chief, Prabhakaran's "military and diplomatic prowess", the speakers at a seminar on "the grief of Eelam Tamils and the duty of India" warned that "those who try to belittle LTTE will never succeed". The Tamil Nationalist Movement leader and convener of the Eelam Tamils Supporters Coordination Committee, P. Nedomaran, questioning the rationale of opposing the LTTE citing the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, asked: "Will you banish all Brahmins from the country be-

cause a Brahmin killed Mahatma Gandhi? Or deport Sikhs because a couple of them assassinated Indira Gandhi?"

Criticising the AIADMK general secretary, Jayalalithaa, for asking the Indian Government not to give a "base for the LTTE", the former AIADMK Minister, Panruti Ramachandran, said the Tamil Tigers were not demanding a "base but only a guest house".

The DPI convener and MLA, R.Tirumavalavan, said the Indian Government should support the proposed talks between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government.

All the speakers, including the Thanthai Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam leader, Viduthalai Rajendran and the Tamil Nationalist Movement general secretary, S.P. Veerapandian, demanded immediate lifting of the ban on the LTTE.

1 FEB 2001

Centre not to concede LTTE plea

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 19. The Centre appears categorical in rejecting the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's plea for using either Chennai or any other part of the southern States as a venue for peace talks with the Sri Lankan Government.

Highly-placed sources said that informal discussions between the Ministries of External Affairs and Home on the subject were recently held and the dominant view was to keep the LTTE at bay from the southern States. In fact, the view in the Home Ministry seems to be that the matter is a closed chapter.

The sources, however, added that the decision could be reconsidered at the highest level in the

Government. The LTTE was banned by the Centre in the aftermath of the assassination of the former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, at Sriperumbudur in 1991. The ban was renewed for another two-year term last May.

The issue of the LTTE getting a foothold in Tamil Nadu for conducting its peace negotiations with the Sri Lankan Government has evoked strong reactions in Tamil Nadu. All major political parties have said the issue comes under the legal purview of the Union Government and that it should be decided by the Centre.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, O. Paneerselvam, has opposed any move to give space for the outlawed LTTE. He said the LTTE was a banned terrorist organisa-

tion and there was no scope for allowing it in the State. The Tamil Maanila Congress (TMC) has written to the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, saying the move was "dangerous" and had sent shockwaves across the State.

The PMK founder, S. Ramadoss, said that he would accept any decision taken by the Centre. At the same time, he said he believed that the LTTE was unlikely to make a request for the use of Indian soil for negotiations. He, however, felt that the ban on the LTTE should be lifted.

The DMK, once a supporter of the LTTE, has expressed serious misgivings about the attempt to make Chennai a base for its political ideologue, Anton Balasingham, to facilitate peace talks.

THE HINDU

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20 JAN 2002

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2002

NO TRUCK WITH THE LTTE

THE STRENUOUS ATTEMPT by or on behalf of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to secure a new foothold within India's territory for the ostensible purposes of a "direct dialogue" with Sri Lanka is neither innocuous nor simply stupid. By any standard of conventional diplomacy, utterly fanciful is the idea being peddled by the LTTE that it might seek India's hospitality as also its "good offices" for the organisation's own "direct" talks with the Sri Lankan authorities under the explicit auspices of Norway as the sole "facilitator" of such parleys. However, there is more to the LTTE's arrogant game plan than meets the eye. Despite being internationally ostracised as a terrorist organisation, the LTTE seems inclined to believe that it can easily hoodwink the Vajpayee administration and gain legitimacy through some backstage subterfuge. Now, the LTTE has launched its new trial balloons against the stormy winds that continue to foil it on the international stage. Independently, the U.S. as also the U.K. and Canada in the West besides India and Sri Lanka have justifiably classified the LTTE, over a period of time, as a detestable purveyor of terror. So, the notoriously fascist organisation is looking now for arguably innovative ways to overcome its predicament and gain some respectability in spite of the ongoing global 'campaign' against all forms of terrorism. This alone can explain the indications that the LTTE wants India to provide an operational base for a purported exercise of exclusive talks between the representatives of the new Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, and the separatist outfit itself.

The LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, desires that his political lieutenant, Anton Balasingham, be allowed to camp in Chennai along with a team of replaceable aides and prepare for possible talks with the Sri Lankan Government. As reported, Mr. Balasingham will want to shuttle between Chennai and Mr. Prabhakaran's Vanni

headquarters in northern Sri Lanka for periodic consultations before and during any such talks. A closely related aspect of this blueprint, which betrays as much political absurdity as indeed audacity, is that India could also host the Colombo-LTTE talks as might be arranged by Norway. A patently ridiculous suggestion in this regard is that India itself could make its presence felt as a "non-participant observer" during such discussions. However, India should cold shoulder the LTTE as and when its laughable ideas of this kind are presented in all seriousness.

India can have no truck with the LTTE on three major counts. First, Mr. Prabhakaran still remains at large as the accused mastermind behind the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. New Delhi cannot compromise on this issue of criminal justice. Second, if the LTTE appears emboldened to try and carve out a sanctuary inside India through the ruse of peaceful intentions, New Delhi must look for any concealed trap behind Mr. Prabhakaran's calculations. The ominous timing of the LTTE's reported move for an overture to the Vajpayee administration should not be missed. It is indeed time that New Delhi prepared for a decisive take-off stage in its own diplomatic campaign to secure a comprehensive crackdown by Pakistan against some identified anti-India terrorist groups. As the Vajpayee administration demands that Pakistan extradite the leaders of Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba, New Delhi cannot be expected to blot its copybook by whitewashing the LTTE's terrorist credentials. Not the least of the factors that India should reckon with is the one concerning Sri Lanka's internal dynamics. New Delhi may have encouraged Mr. Wickremesinghe to try and resolve Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis by engaging the LTTE if he so deems fit. But the LTTE wants India to become a party to Mr. Prabhakaran's invidious game of trying to exclude Sri Lanka's executive President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, from any such process.

THE HINDU

9 JAN 2002

No quarter to LTTE in T.N.: Jayalalithaa

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, JAN. 15. Expressing shock at the "prospect of the LTTE entering Tamil Nadu again", the AIADMK general secretary, Jayalalithaa, today reiterated her party's opposition to any proposal to permit the LTTE to use the State as a base for any of its activities.

"I am shocked that a situation has arisen wherein such a move could even be contemplated by the Government of India," she said in a statement.

In the absence of "any reassuring statement from the Central Government" on not allowing the LTTE to set up base in the country for conducting peace negotia-

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tions with the Sri Lankan Government, she said it was her duty to "once again voice my stout resistance and firm opposition" to any such move.

The general public in Tamil Nadu felt that the use of weapons and firearms became common in the State only after the entry of the Sri Lankan militant organisations. "The people feel that the LTTE had been flushed out of Tamil Nadu only after hard, relentless and untiring efforts under my leadership from 1991 onwards and even a small entry given to them now, once again, would open the Pandora's box," she said.

In her capacity as the leader of

the ruling party in Tamil Nadu, she said it was her duty to oppose the entry of the LTTE "in any manner, under any pretext whatsoever." The AIADMK would not agree to any such proposal.

Ms. Jayalalithaa listed out certain points which, she said, formed the basis for the AIADMK's firm opposition to the entry of the LTTE in Tamil Nadu. One, the LTTE chief, Prabakaran, and the LTTE intelligence chief, Pottu Amman, were proclaimed offenders in the Rajiv assassination case.

Two, the LTTE was banned in India and the ban was in force till May 14, 2002. Three, the LTTE had been declared a terrorist or-

9 - Sri Lanka - nei
ganisation under POTO.

The AIADMK leader maintained that if the LTTE's negotiator, Anton Balasingham, were to be allowed to reside in Chennai, then the pro-LTTE elements would gain inspiration and moral support from the LTTE to propagate secessionism in India "which would affect the security, integrity and sovereignty" of the country.

Noting that the LTTE had floated two militant organisations, the TNRT and the Tamilar Pasarai in Tamil Nadu, she said similar organisations would emerge in greater number jeopardising the tranquillity and security of the State if the LTTE was allowed to have a base here.

THE HINDU

16 JAN 2002

No request from LTTE for talks in India: govt

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: The external affairs ministry has dismissed reports that the LTTE had formally communicated its desire to conduct negotiations with the Sri Lankan government on Indian territory. "Not correct," was the brief response of the external affairs spokesperson, when asked about it.

The LTTE ideologue and spokesman Anton Balasingham had been quoted in reports as stating that he was awaiting the reply of the Indian government to a letter sent by the organisation.

Diplomatic observers say that India was unlikely to accede to such a request even if it were made, since the LTTE was banned in India. The parallel of India holding talks with banned organisations within India does not hold, they state, since the issue of allowing a foreign organisation on Indian territory would have its own set of complications.

The Indian government is also undoubtedly influenced by the prospect that it would be charged with having double standards at a time when it is seeking a clear endorsement of the international community against terrorism directed against India.

Meanwhile in Chennai, AIADMK supremo J. Jayalalithaa, on Tuesday strongly opposed any move by the Centre to allow LTTE spokesman Anton Balasingham

to stay in Chennai for peace negotiations with the Sri Lankan government.

In a delayed statement, Ms Jayalalithaa warned that allowing the LTTE entry into the state and country in any form would open up a Pandora's box. "I am alarmed at the very prospect of the LTTE entering Tamil Nadu again and I am shocked that a situation has arisen wherein such a move could even be contemplated by the government of India," said Ms Jayalalithaa.

She was reacting to a recent report on the LTTE's plea to the Centre to allow Mr Balasingham and his wife to stay in Chennai or any south Indian city to negotiate with the Norwegian team on peace talks with Sri Lankan government.

"The people of Tamil Nadu want to live in peace and the LTTE should not be permitted to spread its tentacles once again in the state," she said and added: "It is my duty to voice my stout resistance and firm opposition to any move to allow the LTTE to enter Tamil Nadu again in any manner and under any pretext whatsoever."

Ms Jayalalithaa observed that if Mr Balasingham is allowed to even temporarily reside in Chennai, pro-LTTE elements would gain inspiration and moral support to propagate secessionism, affecting the country's security, integrity and sovereignty.

India won't host Lanka truce talks

P K Balachandran
Colombo, January 14

INDIA IS letting it be known that it will not host the peace talks between the Sri Lankan Government and the Tigers because LTTE is banned in India.

A top Indian Government source told *Hindustan Times* today that while there had been no official request either from the LTTE or the Norwegian facilitators that India host the talks, it would be reasonable to assume that India would not play host.

India had banned the LTTE in 1992 and the ban had been extended periodically on the grounds that the Tigers continued to be a threat to India's security. Clearly, nothing has happened to change this perception now. It is ironic that the issue of the Indian ban is standing in the way when the LTTE is trying to get the ban lifted by getting India to host the talks.

But the LTTE is adamant. Its chief negotiator Dr Anton Balasingham told the Colombo-based Tamil daily *Sudar Oli* today that the talks could not take place anywhere other than India. "There is no possibility of the talks being held anywhere else," he said.

"From nowhere else can we keep in close touch with our leader Prabhakaran (who is in the jungles of Wannai in north Sri Lanka). There will be a problem of access even if we operate from London, Oslo or Paris," he argued.

"Secondly, I have to participate in the talks and I can participate only if I am alive. This is a humanitarian issue. But without understanding this some political parties and leaders in India have politicised and confused the



PRABHAKARAN

issue," Balasingham complained. He is a diabetic with a serious kidney ailment.

Giving a bait to India, knowing the latter's wish to have a role in the Sri Lankan peace process, Balasingham said that the status of host would give India an opportunity to directly participate in the peace process. He had earlier said that India could be an observer at the talks to know the goings-on first hand.

The LTTE negotiator went on to say that a formal letter requesting India to hold the talks in a south Indian city like Chennai, Bangalore or Thiruvananthapuram had been sent from Oslo and Colombo through the Norwegian facilitators and that the latter were expected to convey New Delhi's decision to him when they meet him in London on Tuesday.

India unlikely to host LTTE-Lanka dialogue

India S Lanka news #1-9 ref

P K Balachandran & GC Shekhar
Colombo/Chennai, January 9

NEW DELHI is unlikely to accept the LTTE's proposal to host the peace talks between the rebels and the Sri Lankan Government. The Tamil Nadu Government is against the rebels' request for sanctuary for spokesman Anton Balasingham in Chennai to facilitate negotiations.

A leading English-language daily had carried a report from Canada saying that the LTTE wanted India to be involved in its latest negotiations with the Lankan Government and hoped

that India would allow Balasingham to be based in Chennai during the talks, which it wished to be held in south India.

The report goes on to say that the Tigers want India to provide medical support and a helicopter for the 63-year-old Balasingham, a diabetic and a kidney patient, to shuttle between Chennai and the Vanni jungles in northern Sri Lanka for consultations with LTTE supremo V Prabhakaran, who continues to be the prime accused in Rajiv Gandhi's assassination.

Balasingham's presence could prove a logistical nightmare for India as it would have to keep

him away from the media and other pro-LTTE groups based in Tamil Nadu.

But the AIADMK, which, under Jayalalitha, rooted out the Tigers between 1991 and 1996, would definitely not like any form of LTTE presence in the State.

"From what we know of our leader, she would definitely not like even LTTE's shadow to be cast on the state," a senior minister told *Hindustan Times*.

Police are wary of giving the LTTE even the smallest toehold in the State to stop it from influencing extremist fringe groups and pro-LTTE mainline parties

such as the MDMK and PMK. "Why invite trouble after getting rid of an unwelcome guest?" asked a senior Intelligence officer.

The State Congress and the TMC are also bound to oppose Balasingham's entry in view of the LTTE's involvement in Rajiv Gandhi's assassination.

A Sri Lankan official involved in the peace process said that the preparatory talks were likely to be held in a place like Mallow in the Vanni jungles of north Sri Lanka and direct talks in a European capital such as London.

"India wants to play a low-key role. Allowing the talks to be held

in India, especially South India, will lead to political troubles which India would be anxious to avoid," the Sri Lankan official said.

Apart from Chennai, Bangalore could be ruled out as a probable venue given memories of the shootout involving Sivarasan, the one-eyed LTTE member who masterminded the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the official said.

The Kerala Government, which is very hard on the Sri Lankan Tamils in general and the LTTE in particular, would be wary of allowing the talks to take place in Thiruvananthapuram.

Sri Lankan officials think that the LTTE may project S P Thamilchelvam, the deputy chief of its political wing, as its main negotiator rather than the ageing Balasingham.

In recent months, the Vanni-based Thamilchelvam has been talking to the Norwegians and generally making political pronouncements on behalf of the group.

Sri Lankan Tamil parties have endorsed the proposal to hold the LTTE-Government peace talks in India.

"India should allow it because it is important for it to see that the Sri Lankan problem is

solved. Tamil Nadu politicians, who are opposing the idea, should think of the future also," said V Arundhasagaree, MP and senior vice-president of Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF).

"Having India as the venue would help that country play a vital role we want it to play," said Vinayagamoorthy, All Ceylon Tamil Congress MP.

He added that in the times to come India might have to contend with the LTTE as a dominant political force in Sri Lanka and that it would be in India's interest to begin cultivating it.

India monitoring talks

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, DEC. 6. Maintaining a close watch on the Sri Lankan political process and the "statement" issued by Norway on the "breakthrough" made in Oslo, India has decided not to respond officially to the developments.

However, sources told this correspondent that the LTTE negotiator, Anton Balasingham, already appeared to have crossed the limits set by the statement issued by Norway on the agreement reached by the "parties" — the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE.

It would appear that Mr. Balasingham's comments to the press on a new Constitution and related issues is what has made the sources believe that the LTTE official had gone beyond the spirit of the agreed text.

The "breakthrough" assessment is not one that is being shared by official circles here though some appear more optimistic than others.

One section believes that the Norwegian statement, as far as it goes, is a general one and simply commits the Tigers and the Colombo to begin talks within an agreed framework. This sec-

tion is conscious of the fact that the key to the success of any peace agreement in Sri Lanka lies in the "detail" and not in the general principles that are contained in the Norwegian statement.

Interestingly, India has recently conveyed to the United States that it will not be lifting the ban on the LTTE and has urged Washington to also retain it.

India has made it clear that the Tigers will remain a banned organisation despite the fact that they were talking to the Sri Lankan Government with international facilitation, the sources said.

During the recent support group meeting for the Sri Lankan peace process on November 25 in Norway, the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, reportedly told Mr. Balasingham that the Tigers must renounce violence.

In itself, the agreement between the "parties" announced by Norway on Thursday does represent a "forward movement", but the process will have greater credibility if the LTTE chief, Prabhakaran, was a signatory to the document. Whatever be the progress or the problems

with Thursday's statement, a "signature" from Mr. Prabhakaran would make a considerable difference to the whole peace process. As LTTE watchers are aware, Mr. Prabhakaran has had major problems with Mr. Balasingham in the past, but is aware that in the current international climate some one like the LTTE negotiator is necessary for him.

A close reading of the "statement" issued in Oslo reveals that the Tigers have not made any commitment to renounce violence in the agreed text. Statements made at press conferences by people like Mr. Balasingham do not count for much as far as eschewing violence is concerned.

While supporting the general trajectory of peace and compromise, healthy scepticism towards an organisation such as the LTTE is very much called for given its past record.

For India, the peace process throws up many dilemmas. The Rajiv Gandhi murder case, of course, and Mr. Prabhakaran being an accused, is a key one. Also, the contours of a "settlement" in Sri Lanka, if at all it happens, has obvious implications for New Delhi.

7 DEC 2002

THE HINDU

New Delhi will be forced to recognise us, says LTTE

PK Balachandran
Colombo, December 3

THE PROGRESSIVE internationalisation of the Sri Lankan Tamil problem will leave India with no option but to recognise the LTTE as the sole representative of the Sri Lankan Tamils, says the LTTE's chief negotiator and ideologue Anton Balasingham.

In his annual oration to mark the LTTE's Heroes' Day at London last Saturday, Balasingham said the internationalisation would also force India to give up its stand-offishness in regard to the peace process and begin to take an active part in it.

Criticising India for virtually boycotting the donors' conference in Oslo on November 25, Balasingham said that India would have to see the dangers of being left out when over 70 countries attend the Tokyo conference on giving an economic backing to the Sri Lankan peace process in 2003.



Anton Balasingham
Bullish

Balasingham said India's attitude to the LTTE was shaped by domestic compulsions. He did not identify the compulsions but went on to lambast the hardline anti-LTTE stance of the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa. Describing Jayalalithaa derisively as "Gundamma" or the Fat Lady, Balasingham warned that no matter how repressive she might get and how many Tamil nationalists she

might put in jail, she would not be able to suppress the fast swelling support for the LTTE among the people of Tamil Nadu.

LTTE mouthpiece Sudar Oli said in an editorial today that some of India's actions gave room for doubt about its support for the peace process. It asked India to stop making a fuss about Rajiv Gandhi's assassination (by the LTTE) and to take part in the efforts to solve the Tamil problem.

It said assassinations were not new to India as Mahatma Gandhi and Indira Gandhi were also assassinated.

The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) has also asked India to shed its reserve and take an active part in the peace process. Recognising the importance of the Congress stand on the LTTE in shaping New Delhi's attitude to the LTTE, TULF president V Anandasangaree has said Sonia Gandhi should bury the past and magnanimously allow New Delhi to take a sympathetic view.

4 DEC 2002

Sri Lankan Minister to meet Sinha

By V.S. Sambandan

HO-1 2/1/11
Sri Lanka's Minister for Ports and Shipping, Rauff Hakeem, is to meet key decision-makers in India tomorrow before the Oslo donors' conference, scheduled to be held on November 25.

Mr. Hakeem, who is an important member of Colombo's negotiating team with the Tigers, is likely to meet the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, and other senior officials during his visit.

Another Minister, Milinda Moragoda, is also likely to arrive in India in the next few days, in what is seen as an effort to win an Indian participation at the Oslo conference.

Mr. Hakeem represents the Muslim interests and Mr. Moragoda, who is a key player in the talks, is responsible for briefing

the President, Chandrika Kumaratunga) and her senior adviser on Foreign Affairs, Lakshman Kadirgamar, on the progress of the peace process.

Joint appeal

According to media reports on Tuesday, the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE have agreed to make a joint appeal for support at the Oslo conference.

The State-run *Daily News* said the first meeting of the sub-committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Reconstruction Needs in the Northeast (SIHRN), formed at the recently-concluded Thailand talks, discussed how this appeal would be worded. "The appeal calls for aid for the sustainability of the peace process," the LTTE was quoted as saying.

The seven-hour meeting was

held at the office of the Government Agent in Kilinochchi town on Monday. "Both parties agreed on a set of procedural guidelines for the sub-committee and the financial structure for its secretariat," the report said.

EPDP asked to leave islet

Meanwhile, the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), a former militant group, which took to Parliamentary politics, has been asked by the LTTE to vacate an islet off the northern Jaffna peninsula. The EPDP has said that it would leave the islet only if the Tigers also left.

During the past few days, the EPDP cadres have been facing increasing civilian protests asking them to vacate the islet. The party has alleged that the Tigers were behind the protests.

THE HINDU

21 NOV 2002

Oslo meet: India's position keenly watched

By V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, NOV. 19. Despite the scheduled presence of the U.S. and the U.K. at this month's donor's conference in Oslo, the Indian position continues to be keenly watched by the island's major political parties.

The political reactions to the present Indian position are along predictable lines.

While the Government is keen on an Indian presence, the Opposition has said that it was "sympathetic" to the Indian stand that it was "unlikely" to send a delegation to the Oslo conclave, organised to raise international financial backing for the ongoing peace process between Colombo and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The issue is not merely whether a delegation from Delhi will participate in the Oslo event but what any Indian decision would mean in the continuum of the Indian policy in the

emerging conflict resolution scenario.

The LTTE's presence in Oslo cuts both ways for the Sri Lankan Government. Though a signal that the Tigers are now onboard the peace train, that makes it tough for Colombo to convince New Delhi to share a table with the Tigers, banned in India since May 14, 1992. The LTTE leader, V. Prabhakaran, is wanted by the Indian courts to stand trial for the assassination of the former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, who was killed by a suicide bomber on May 21, 1991.

At least 1,155 Indian soldiers were killed in battles between the Indian Peace Keeping Forces and the LTTE between 1987 and 1990. One projected scenario is that the countries that banned the LTTE could "be present at the conclave, but still make a tough statement that the Tigers will be under constant scrutiny".

However, "India's case is

completely different", a political observer told *The Hindu*. "In the case of the U.S. or U.K, forget about any leader, they have not lost even a single citizen to the LTTE. But in India, a leader of world stature was killed".

If there is an Indian participation, "the LTTE will like it", the political observer said. Any form of participation will mean "recognition" and "will be seen as an indirect signal, if not, of a lifting of the ban, at least the meaninglessness of it", he added. The LTTE factor, according to political analysts, is one side of the Indian dilemma. The Sri Lankan Government has not held back the endorsement it has got from the U.S., the U.K., Australia and Japan.

"The high-powered nature and the political profile of the conference creates a dilemma for India", said Ketheswaran Loganathan of the Centre for Policy Analysis. "Some could argue that it is always useful to have a major power, which continues

to exert pressure on the LTTE, and India could play that role" by staying away.

However, given the sharply polarised opinion in Sri Lanka on the conflict, "there is grave danger that such a position will be utilised by those against the peace, such as the hawkish hardliners and the peace-spoilers in the south", he said.

Emphasising that any decision by New Delhi will have a bearing on the negotiation process, D. Sithadthan, leader of the People's Liberation Organisation for Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) said, "until the ethnic conflict is settled, India will have to give the primacy of importance to the Tamil-Sinhala issue in its bilateral decisions." As far as his party, which is not a part of the pro-LTTE political alliance, was concerned, "India's involvement is a must" in the peace process. However, "when and how to enter it is entirely left to India's judgement", he said.

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Colombo to seek Delhi's participation in donors' meet

By V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, NOV. 17. A senior Sri Lankan Minister, Milinda Moragoda, and Oslo's envoy to Colombo, Jon Westborg, are to make separate visits to India "to urge" its participation in the international donors' conference, scheduled to be held in Oslo on November 25, media reports said here today.

The *Sunday Times* reported that Mr. Moragoda, would go to India "early next week to drum up support for the forum". India's "stoic silence" has led to a flurry of media reports, each projecting a different scenario.

While the *Sunday Observer* said the Indian envoy in Oslo "is expected" to "represent" the country, the *Sunday Leader*, reported that India "will come out with a statement strongly supportive of the Government's peace process".

India's present position is that it is "unlikely" that a delegation will be sent to the Oslo conference. The Sri Lankan

Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, is scheduled to discuss political issues with the LTTE's chief negotiator, Anton S. Balasingham, who is also attending the conference, along the sidelines of the meeting.

Sri Lanka's separatist ethnic conflict has dominated bilateral relations, but there are now calls for re-defining the scope of the ties.

Pointing out that "India has reasons either to go or not to go" to the Oslo conference, Jayadeva Uyangoda, Head of the Department of Political Science, University of Colombo, told *The Hindu* that "some people in Sri Lanka may like to overplay the India factor".

"India's relations with Sri Lanka should not be seen only through the prism of the Sinhala-Tamil conflict," Dr. Uyangoda said, calling for a "diversified engagement with the people of Sri Lanka".

Such a move "will unshackle bilateral relations from the decades of mutual apprehensions.

India - Sri Lanka ties

It is time for the media and the intelligentsia to start redefining Indo-Lanka relations in a possible post-conflict environment", he said.

Since the withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) from Sri Lanka in 1989-90, New Delhi has adopted a hands-off position on the ethnic conflict, which it has maintained during changing battlefield scenarios.

Just before the LTTE lost Jaffna to the Government forces in December 1995 and during the late 1990s, there were demands from the Sri Lankan Tamil political parties for an Indian intervention.

Subsequently, after the fall of the strategically important Elephant Pass military base complex and during the advances towards Jaffna by the Tigers in April-May 2000, calls for Indian support came from the Sri Lankan Government as well as the Buddhist clergy, which had opposed the 1980s Indian involvement as an "intervention".

India, U.S. concur on Colomb peace process

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 25 India and the United States expressed concurring views on the Sri Lankan peace process at a "regional issues dialogue" between the visiting U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Christina Rocca, and the Joint Secretary (U.S.), Jayant Prasad, today.

Sources said the U.S., like India, had no immediate plans to lift the ban on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and Washington was watching whether the Tigers would match their words with deeds.

The Indian side mentioned that there were added complications for New Delhi on the issue since the LTTE was behind the killing of a former Prime Minister and responsible for the killing of Indian soldiers.

Ms. Rocca, who also called on the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, had detailed discussions with Mr. Prasad on Bangladesh, Nepal, China and the Middle East as well.

Significantly, India and the U.S. have agreed to a separate set of talks on East Asia, including China, between the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, James Kelly, and the Joint Secretary (East Asia), Nalin Surie, in Washington.

Given the fact that the U.S. had discussions about South

Asia with China, the dialogue with India on East Asia is being seen as a major step in the sharing of views. The detailed discussions today reflected a new level of engagement between Washington and New Delhi on an entire range of issues.

It dealt with India-Bangladesh bilateral relations as well the Maoist insurgency in Nepal.

India and the U.S. decided to institute a dialogue on regional affairs in view of their mutual interest in stability in India's extended neighbourhood, as also in the wider Asia-Pacific region.

"A further opportunity to discuss Asian security will arise when the U.S. Under Secretary of State, Marc Grossman, visits New Delhi next month for the India-U.S. Foreign Office consultations, for which he will be hosted by the Foreign Secretary," the sources maintained.

Indians sentenced to death

DUBAI, SEPT. 25. Three Indians have been sentenced to death by a Dubai court for possessing and dealing in drugs.

The three — Hamid Soofi Mohiyuddin, 40, Sulaiman Rahman Ibrahim, 30, and Sebastian Kurian, 33, who were nabbed in a sting operation by the Dubai police in May, were sentenced yesterday, a newspaper reported today. — PTI

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Norway envoy briefs Sibal on Colombo-LTTE talks

By Arjit Baruah

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 20. Norwegian facilitators will work on an "agenda" with the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE for the next round of peace talks in Thailand scheduled to commence on October 31. Eric Solheim, Norway's special envoy for the peace process, who met with the Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal, this morning, said he had briefed the Indian official about the talks. "I conveyed all the details of what had happened (to Mr. Sibal)," Mr. Solheim said, adding that he also met informally with the Congress leader, Natwar Singh. When asked what had been the Indian response to his briefing, Mr. Solheim told this correspondent that New Delhi was "behind and supportive" of the ongoing dialogue between Colombo and the Tigers.

To a question on what would happen between now and October 31, when the second round of talks are expected to commence, the Norwegian special envoy said the LTTE negotiator, Anton Balasingham, would travel to the Vanni region to brief the Tiger leader, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, about the talks. "Mr. Balasingham will brief Prabhakaran about what has transpired," he said, adding that "other" LTTE leaders would also meet to discuss the details of what had happened in Thailand.

In response to another question, Mr. Solheim

said it was likely that he and the Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister, Vidar Helgesen, would travel to Vanni to meet Mr. Prabhakaran before the next round of talks commenced. It is already known that Rauf Hakeem, leader of the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress, will travel along with a delegation of Muslim leaders to hold discussions with the LTTE chief.

When asked if progress in the peace talks could lead to an eventual face-to-face meeting between Mr. Prabhakaran and the Sri Lankan leaders, Chandrika Kumaratunga and Ranil Wickremesinghe, Mr. Solheim said he would not like to speculate on such a possibility. "The parties concerned have not decided yet," Mr. Solheim stated.

Mr. Natwar Singh said Mr. Solheim had been good enough to keep the Congress informed about the developments in the peace process. While the Congress welcomed the peace process, Mr. Singh said the Government of India and the Congress would continue to insist on the extradition of Mr. Prabhakaran to face trial in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

According to Mr. Singh, his party was for the peaceful solution of the Sri Lankan question, but was against the creation of "Eelam". The Congress, he said, wanted a solution within the framework of the Sri Lankan Constitution, which safeguarded the rights of the Tamils.

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India backs Sri Lankan peace talks

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 20. The Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal, said today that there could be "two interpretations" of the LTTE's "new" position on separatism while denying reports that the LTTE negotiator, Anton Balasingham, might make a "transit halt" in India.

Offering India's support to the Norwegian-facilitated peace talks between the Sri Lankan Government and the Tigers in Thailand, Mr. Sibal said one could take the view that Mr. Balasingham had said nothing "frightfully new". On the other hand, the LTTE negotiator's position was important in the context of the beginning of the peace talks.

These remarks, which juxtaposed autonomy against a separate state, Mr. Sibal said, were part of building up trust between Colombo and the LTTE and lead to clarity in terms of the "intentions" of the two sides.

Stating that India had an "abiding interest" in the reconstruction and development of Sri Lanka, Mr. Sibal remarked that the idea of a donors' conference on the issue had come up. He was not, however, sure when and where such a meeting would be held. He welcomed the adoption of a "conciliatory approach" at the Norwegian-facilitated peace talks between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE in Thailand.

This had resulted in agreement to "to deal jointly" with important issues, including internally displaced persons, hu-

manitarian and reconstruction activities and de-mining.

"The Government of India has in the past and continues to support efforts to take the peace process towards a settlement that meets the just aspirations of all elements of Sri Lankan society within a sovereign, united Sri Lanka," he said at a press conference.

'No confidence in Musharraf'

Responding to questions, Mr. Sibal said India did not have any confidence in the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, and the fact that New Delhi had been able to hold the first phase of elections in Jammu and Kashmir "reasonably successfully" did not mean that Islamabad's pledge to end cross-border terrorism had been honoured.

In a sharp response, Mr. Sibal told a reporter why he was assuming that India had any "confidence" in Gen. Musharraf earlier. In fact, since he had not lived up his commitments on the issue of terrorism to the international community (including the United States), the question was whether these countries were losing confidence in the Pakistani leader.

Gen. Musharraf had described the elections in Kashmir as a "sham" and had exhorted the Kashmiris to stay away from the polls. The issue between India and Pakistan was not a "decline in infiltration" but an end of terrorism, Mr. Sibal maintained. And, this meant the existence of terrorism training camps, supply of arms and dealing with the jihadi groups in Pakistan.

Distancing himself from the view that credible elections in Kashmir would lead to the resumption of dialogue between India and Pakistan, Mr. Sibal said India was ready for talks if Islamabad met the condition of ending cross-border terrorism. Talks, he said, was not an idea that the international community was imposing on India.

Mr. Sibal said India was trying to find a solution to the problem internally and referred to the success of the first phase of the four-stage Kashmir elections.

The picture, he said, would become clear after October 8. Internally, the process should be taken forward, he added.

Asked about the trilateral meeting between the Foreign Ministers of India, China and Russia in New York, Mr. Sibal said its significance lay in the fact that it was held.

That such a meeting was not taking place earlier could be called a "little bit of an anomaly", but the reason was the lack of confidence. There was a need to attain a certain level of confidence and that "level of confidence was being reached", he claimed.

"What is wrong with India, China and Russia talking to each other", he said, adding that these days everyone was talking to everyone else.

After all, these countries were major nations and each of them had a high-level dialogue with the other. And, in the context of the issues before the U.N. General Assembly, such discussions were quite normal.

'Prabakaran should be extradited'

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, AUG. 28. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, today sought the extradition of the LTTE leader, Prabakaran, to face trial in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, in which he had been declared a "proclaimed offender" by a Designated Court in the country.

Addressing a press conference, she said that simply because political moves were on in Sri Lanka one could not forget the basic facts that Prabakaran was an accused and that he should be extradited to face the trial.

Asked whether her Government would show leniency to the LTTE in the context of new peace initiatives being taken by the Sri Lankan Government, she said the internal matters of Sri Lanka were different.

On the arrest of the MDMK leader Vaiko for supporting the LTTE cause, she asserted that he had been detained under POTA. Asked whether her Government would wait for six months to file a chargesheet against him, she said it would be filed soon.

Would her Government ban the MDMK? She said: "we are gathering all the evidence and presenting it to the Centre". The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister had replied to her to the letter seeking the dropping of the two MDMK Ministers from the Union Cabinet.

Assails EC's order on Gujarat

Referring to the Election Commission's order on Gujarat, she said the Commission

had overstepped its brief by recommending the imposition of President's rule in the State.

Nowhere in the Constitution had the Commission been given powers to recommend President rule in a State. But the Commission which had been "interfering with the functioning" of the State Government was now taking the role of Governor and Parliament.

"This is a very serious issue which could affect all the States in future", she said and added that "linking Article 174 with Article 324 is not advisable". The Commission was trying to

"arrogate the powers of Parliament. Now

T.N. Govt. to ban temple ritual

Referring to the recent reports of a ritual in a temple near Madurai where children were drugged and buried for a minute, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Ms. Jayalalithaa, said at a press conference in New Delhi today that it was confined to one temple in one village and the ritual was practised once in seven years.

After it was brought to her notice, the Government had decided to ban such a practice, she said and added that she would be accepting the resignation of C. Durairaj, Tamil Nadu Minister, who was present at the ritual.

No change in India's position on LTTE

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, AUG. 28. India today said that its request for the extradition of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, had not been diluted by the Sri Lankan Government's decision to lift the ban on the Tigers before the Thailand peace talks commenced.

The Foreign Office spokeswoman told presspersons this evening that India had no plans to "review" its own decision to brand the Tigers as an illegal organisation.

"Our request for extradition remains valid under international law," the spokeswoman said in response to a series of questions on Sri Lanka, the LTTE and Mr. Prabhakaran's extradition at her regular daily briefing.

Mr. Prabhakaran, she said, was wanted in the assassination of the former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi.

Her comments came as she visited Sri Lankan Economic Reform Minister, Milinda Moragoda, held discussions with the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha.

Mr. Moragoda, who has been negotiating with the LTTE, has been briefing the Indian lead-

that Supreme Court has asked for the views of the States, we will be giving our views."

Attacks Sonia on poll ordinance

Referring to the contention of the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, that there was no consensus on the poll reforms ordinance, she said, "This is nothing but a classic case of back-tracking, as an after-thought".

She pointed out that during the second all-party meeting in which H.R. Bhardwaj represented the Congress, the party aligned with all the other parties to delete the "disqualification clause" (in the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill on a mere charge being framed against a person in a criminal case.

Further, it was pointed out that there was already a procedure in which Members of Parliament, as in the case of Legislative Members, were to disclose their assets within six months of their election either to the Speaker or the Chairman of the respective Houses.

"If the records (of the two meetings) are perused, the stand of the Congress party would be easily understood", Ms. Jayalithaa said and added that the recorded proceedings would go a long way in revealing the truth on who had spoken and in what manner. "Thus the contention of Ms. Sonia Gandhi that there was no consensus in those meetings is nothing but a classic case of back-tracking, as an afterthought", she added.

ership on the progress made in the peace talks.

She made it clear that there was no change in the Indian Government's position as far as the proscription of the LTTE was concerned.

"There is no change in our position... it's between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE," she said when asked whether Colombo's decision would have any impact on New Delhi.

The spokeswoman said India had no intention of getting involved in the Norwegian-facilitated peace talks between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government.

Asked if India intended to send an observer to Thailand for the peace talks, she said no such proposal was under the Government's consideration.

India wished the peace process in Sri Lanka well, she said and referred to the intensive contacts between the Indian and Sri Lankan political leaders in recent months.

The exchanges of such visits had built an atmosphere of "trust and understanding" between the two countries.

India, she reiterated, was committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

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Sri Lanka for JWG on economic ties

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 27. Sri Lanka today proposed to India the setting up of a joint working group to coordinate economic relations even as it sought India's assistance in reconstruction and rehabilitation of the strife-torn country.

The suggestion was made by the visiting Sri Lankan Minister for Economic Reforms and the designated principal negotiator for peace talks with the LTTE, Milinda Moragoda, during his meeting with the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, K. C. Pant, here.

A major point that came up was the proposed land bridge between India and Sri Lanka (Rameshwaram and Mannar) and it was decided that an Indian team would

make a preliminary pre-feasibility study in Tamil Nadu, followed by a feasibility study involving technical and financial implications. Sri Lanka is keen on the feasibility study as it wants this issue to be in the basket of issues that the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, will discuss during his Japan visit and with other world leaders in order to arrange funding for it.

Talking to presspersons after meeting Mr. Pant, Mr. Moragoda said India had always given moral strength to Sri Lanka and its development aid would reinforce the peace process in his country. India's help would be crucial in four critical areas of aid — market access, technical assistance, both conceptual and professional, and foreign investment.

The Sri Lankan Minister also expressed

confidence that the modalities of the export of Indian wheat to the island nation would be worked out shortly to the satisfaction of both the countries.

India has extended a \$ 31-million line of credit to Sri Lanka for the purchase of three lakh tonnes of wheat from here over a span of 20 months with an average of 15,000 tonnes every month. The credit facility is valid for 15 years on 100 per cent of the free-on-board value of the commodity with a grace period of five years.

India wants the deal to be executed through the public sector agency, Nafed, but the monopoly miller in Sri Lanka, Priema, is reportedly insisting that it be done through five multinational companies which it hopes will charge a smaller commission.

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'Sri Lanka concerned over nuclearisation'

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By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 8. The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Tyronne Fernando, said today that India's relations with Pakistan were a bilateral matter for the two countries, but said as a small country of 20 million Sri Lanka was very concerned at the possession of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan.

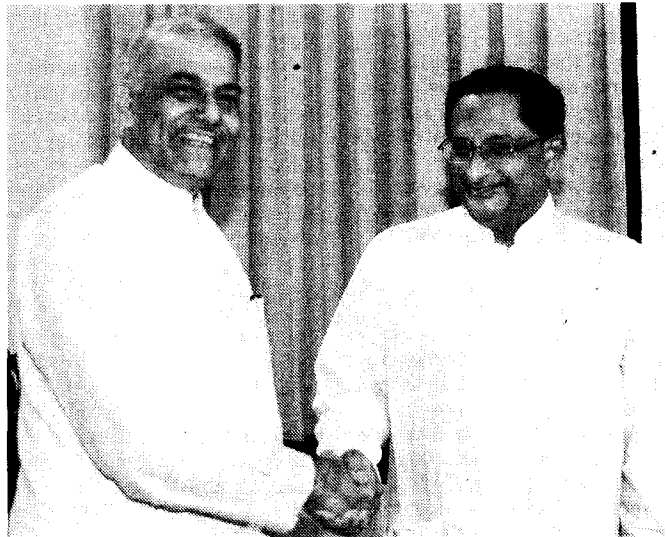
Speaking at the Foreign Correspondents Club, Mr. Fernando, who called on the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, said the Sri Lankan Prime Minister conceded to presspersons that a fresh election in his country would delay the peace process.

He said the differences between the Sri Lankan President and the Prime Minister had not had any negative impact on the peace process with the LTTE. Mr. Fernando hoped that these differences would not trigger a fresh election in Sri Lanka.

Referring to the "turbulence" in the relationship between the President and the Prime Minister, Mr. Fernando said Ranil Wickremseinghe would meet Chandrika Kumaratunga soon to sort out the differences.

Mr. Fernando said it was Ms. Kumaratunga who had brought in the Norwegians into the negotiating process. Credit for the peace process should be shared by the President, the Prime Minister and the LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran.

Stating that the law and order in Sri Lanka had improved considerably and there had been no deaths in the last eight months, Mr. Fernando said the Sri Lankan Army was still to pull back



The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Tyronne Fernando, in New Delhi on Thursday. — Reuters

from some schools and temples.

The Foreign Minister maintained that his Government was not looking too much at the "motivations" of the LTTE — saying that the Tigers had extended their hand and the Wickremesinghe Government had grabbed it. The peace process, he said repeatedly, had to be built brick by brick.

He stoutly denied that the peace talks in Thailand had been postponed; since the talks had not been scheduled so far, there was no question of their being postponed.

Mr. Fernando made it clear that the Norwegian Government would not be participating in the Thailand talks as and then they are held. Talks will only be between the Sri Lankan Government and the Tigers.

Asked how scrupulously the LTTE had been adhering to the ceasefire, the Foreign Minister stated that there had been a few violations, but it was going well. He described as a step forward the recent meeting between the LTTE ideologue, Anton Balasingham, and a Sri Lankan Minister, Milinda Moragoda.

To a question of the impact of the September 11 events on the LTTE, Mr. Fernando said the attacks on the U.S. had created a situation where there was tremendous international pressure on all armed groups to come for negotiations.

He said the American decision to proscribe the LTTE had put pressure on the Tigers. All this, he remarked, had put pressure on the LTTE to come for talks. "The main thing is to move on from here."

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Sri Lankan Minister seeks release of Vaiko, Nedumaran

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By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, AUG. 4. In what could have implications for bilateral ties, the Sri Lankan Minister for Community Development, P. Chandrasekaran, has urged the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, to "immediately release" the MDMK leader, Vaiko, and the Tamil Nationalist Movement leader, P. Nedumaran, detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) for supporting the banned Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

In a letter to Ms. Jayalalithaa, he said the Tamil

plantation workers in Sri Lanka saw Mr. Vaiko and Mr. Nedumaran as "courageous frontline leaders".

Stating that Sri Lanka had the second largest population of Tamils, next only to Tamil Nadu, he said the Eelam Tamils were "fending a face to a great political struggle that had caught international attention". Hence, "no leader from Tamil Nadu can speak of world Tamils without mentioning the Sri Lankan Tamils. This is the reality". And, the Tamil plantation workers were of the view that the speeches of Mr. Vaiko and Mr. Nedumaran were based

on the understanding of that reality.

Mr. Chandrasekaran called upon Ms. Jayalalithaa to release Mr. Vaiko and Mr. Nedumaran and "falsify the view that her actions are born out of her failure to understand this reality".

"Please take into consideration the need for the Tamil Nadu Government to give a deep thought to the issue", he said. The Minister claimed that he was making the plea on behalf of the plantation Tamils of Sri Lanka.

However, this is not the first time that Mr.

Chandrasekaran has disapproved of the arrest of pro-LTTE leaders in Tamil Nadu. Recently, when he was in Chennai to attend the controversial inaugural function of the World Tamil Federation organised by Mr. Nedumaran, he declared that Tamil Nadu should produce "thousands and thousands"

Further, in his letter, he stated that the basic objective of the World Tamil Federation was to save the ancient language of Tamil, which had been listed as one of the 10 languages facing extinction within the next few decades.

Pro-LTTE slogans grow louder

Statesman News Service

CHENNAI, July 21. — The second day of the World Tamil Confederation conference here saw a section of the audience raising pro-LTTE slogans. The provocation seemed to have come from Tamil Nationalist Movement leader Mr Pazha Nedumaran.

He said: "I've been supporting the LTTE for the past 20 years. There is no secrecy about that and I've made no bones about it. But that doesn't mean that my job is to only praise the LTTE. My main concern is the welfare of the Tamils. And, this conference wasn't organised to speak about the LTTE." Soon after, several members of the audience shouted: "*Aatharippom, aatharippom, puligalai aatharippom* (We'll support the Tigers)".

Madras High Court had allowed the organisers to hold the conference on the condition that no pro-LTTE speeches would be made and literature distributed.

For most part of the day, however, the references to the LTTE and its supremo, Velupillai Pirabhakaran, were subtle. The speakers, mostly Tamil pandits, were careful enough not to mention the words LTTE or Pirabhakaran, but they made apparent

their admiration for the Tigers and their commander. Their comments drew loud cheers from the audience.

A poet, Aruvumathi, known for his pro-LTTE stand, hailed Pirabhakaran as *Velhum pillai* (triumphant son) without mentioning his name.

The poems that were recited at the conference had undercurrents of praise for Pirabhakaran and the LTTE's struggle for an Eelam (homeland) in the north of Sri Lanka. The poets and litterateurs were mindful of Miss Jayalalitha's tough stand on pro-LTTE outfits and the recent arrest of Mr Vaiko under Pota.

They sought to beat the government through clever use of the language, using alliterations and rhetorics to praise the armed struggle for Eelam.

Jaya slams Ramadoss: Miss Jayalalitha today criticised PMK leader Dr S Ramadoss for demanding division of Tamil Nadu to create a Vanniyar (most backward caste)-dominated state in the north. "Dr Ramadoss has revealed his true colours," she said in a statement.

But Dr Ramdoss tonight defended his demand and said it would help allround development of Tamil Nadu.

Sinha visit to enhance trade ties with Colombo

By V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, JULY 13. Keeping in line with the present Indian focus on economic diplomacy in the neighbourhood, the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha's two-day visit to Sri Lanka which concluded on Friday, set the tone for increased trade ties between the two countries.

The key announcements made in a joint statement by the two countries include the setting up of an Indian Cancer Centre in Colombo. India's contribution would be \$7.5 million and a team will be visiting India shortly to work out the modalities. In addition, Delhi's assistance was sought for restructuring Sri

Lanka's railway sector. An important concession granted by India was a further softening of terms of the line of credit of \$100 million already granted to Sri Lanka. This relaxation was to have applied to the second and third tranches of the loan. However, during Mr. Sinha's visit, it was agreed that the relaxation would apply to the unutilised balance of the first tranche as well.

At the delegation-level talks held on Friday the two Foreign Ministers "acknowledged the progress made in the expeditious resolution of the outstanding issues relating to tea, garments and cement under the Free Trade Agreement." Mr. Sinha's visit also marked the issuing of the first computerised visas.

Talking to journalists after inaugurating the facility at the Indian High Commission here, the Minister said the visit had nurtured the goodwill existing between the two countries. "I have come to Sri Lanka almost immediately after I have taken on my new responsibilities to once again emphasise the importance that we attach to the good neighbourliness policy followed by us," Mr. Sinha told Indian journalists last evening.

The Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Gopal Krishna Gandhi, the Joint Secretary for Sri Lanka, Neelam Deo, and senior diplomats participated in the official discussions. Mr. Sinha's visit to the island started with a visit to an important Buddhist shrine near Colombo,

where he was received with full honours, and concluded with an address at the centenary celebrations of the Vivekananda Society here, after which he left for New Delhi in a special IAF aircraft.

Tamil political leaders also called on Mr. Sinha during his visit. The leaders from the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), V. Anandasangaree and R. Sampanthan, appraised him of the current situation. Two other leaders, D. Sidhathan of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) and Douglas Devananda of the Eelam Peoples Democratic Front, also called on him separately last evening and requested Indian participation in the conflict resolution.

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Vaiko, a consistent LTTE supporter

By R. Ilangoan

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MADURAI, JULY 13. The Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) leader, Vaiko, riding a tiger has landed himself in trouble. Mr. Vaiko, a consistent supporter of the LTTE, made news only when he did not refer to 'Tamil Eelam' or the LTTE. The Lok Sabha MP from Sivakasi never shied away from projecting himself as a protector of 'Tamil Eelam'. He was a vocal supporter of this cause, which he championed in his public meetings whenever the DMK was in power.

A rabble-rouser from the stables of the DMK, he shot into limelight when he slipped into Jaffna to spend a month in the jungles with the LTTE leader, V. Prabhakaran, in 1989. It created a furore and his 'sly' act disturbed the DMK chief, M. Karunanidhi, who reacted sharply saying that he was "not aware of Gopalsamy's trip."

Mr. Vaiko took pride in calling himself the "only Indian politician" who fought for the Tamil Eelam cause at international fora. He submitted a series of complaints against the Sri Lankan Government to the Human Rights Commission in Geneva. He toured many countries and addressed meetings mainly to sensitise people about the sufferings of the Sri Lankan Tamils after the 1984 genocide in the island nation.

Mr. Vaiko has equated the

Tamil Eelam struggle with the Palestine movement. Making a speech at a cadre's wedding on October 30, 2000 in Madurai, he said he met the LTTE ideologue, Anton Balasingam, who underwent a surgery at a London hospital. Calling it a "humanitarian gesture", he admitted that he had held discussions with him on certain issues.

He claimed that he found nothing wrong in supporting the Sri Lankan Tamils' struggle. "When a Palestine state could be formed why not Tamil Eelam?" he asked. He called the Sri Lankan Army in Jaffna an occupational force, which should "either be defeated or evicted."

Both the MDMK and Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) have strongly criticised the NDA Government's decision to seek the extradition of Mr. Prabhakaran in connection with the Rajiv Gandhi assassination. The MDMK has called it an exercise in futility. The two NDA partners have also criticised the move of the Multi Disciplinary Monitoring Agency (MDMA), which has called for the extradition of the LTTE leader.

Mr. Vaiko protested the deportation of Mr. Prabhakaran's close friend, M.K. Eelavendan, from Chennai to Colombo for not possessing a valid visa.

A party worker here said that even now Mr. Vaiko sported a wristwatch presented to him by an LTTE cadre during his stay with Mr. Prabhakaran.

THE HINDU

10 JUL 2002

India firm on demand for extradition of Prabakaran, says Sinha

By V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, JULY 12. There is "no contradiction" in India's demand for extradition of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) chief, V. Prabakaran, and its support for the Sri Lankan peace process, the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, said here today.

Mr. Sinha, who had "reaffirmed India's full support" to the measures taken by Sri Lanka "to take the peace process forward" during his meetings with Sri Lankan leaders, told journalists this evening that New Delhi's position on extradition had been "clearly stated from time to time and the Government of Sri Lanka is aware of it."

Asked whether these two positions were not contradictory, the Minister said, "No. I don't see any contradiction because we have our laws to observe and there is a peace process here."

On June 3, 1995, India had sought the extradition of Mr. Prabakaran, Pottu Amman, LTTE's intelligence chief and



The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, with the Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, in Colombo on Friday. — Photo: Sriyantha Walpola

Akila, deputy chief of the LTTE's women's intelligence wing, to stand trial in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. The Sri Lankan Ministry of Foreign Affairs forwarded the request to the Defence Ministry, which was sent to the Attorney General of Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan position was that they could not

apprehend the rebel chief. Mr. Sinha saw "no reason to be disappointed" at the delays in the peace talks and counselled "patience" to all the parties involved in the Norwegian-facilitated peace process. "Despite difficulties, the agreement, by and large, is operational," he said.

Asked about the "de-facto control" over the north and east and the reported "violation of human rights" by the LTTE, he said that was "a delicate issue." There were monitors headed by a third party to observe the ceasefire and the issue of a 'de-facto Tamil Eelam' was to be looked in to by the two sides involved in the conflict. "If we have views, we will give it to those who can implement it."

Meets Chandrika

Earlier in the day, Mr. Sinha met the Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, and discussed "matters of bilateral interest." According to the Presidential Secretariat, Ms. Kumaratunga "reiterated the need to commence direct peace talks with the LTTE at the earliest to reach a lasting and durable negotiated political settlement". The Sri Lankan Foreign Affairs Minister, Tyronne Fernando, the President's Foreign Affairs Advisor, Lakshman Kadirgamar, were present at the hour-long meeting.

13 JUL 2002

Gopal Gandhi to be replaced as high commissioner

Sinha salve on Lanka

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, July 12: Allaying fears in Sri Lanka in the wake of MDMK leader Vaiko's support for a separate Tamil Eelam, foreign minister Yashwant Sinha has assured Colombo that Delhi continues to remain committed to the "unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity" of the island nation.

Sinha, who reached Sri Lanka yesterday afternoon, also made it clear that India was fully supportive of the measures taken by the Sri Lankan government to find a permanent and peaceful solution to the decade-old ethnic strife in the country.

In a related development, India has decided to replace Gopal Gandhi, its high commissioner in Sri Lanka, with Nirupam Sen, who is at present India's ambassador to Norway. South Block is reportedly unhappy with Gandhi's style of handling India's relations with Sri Lanka over the past few years.

But South Block did not make its displeasure apparent. Instead, Gandhi and Sen will swap

places, with the former now taking up his successor's post as envoy to Norway.

The foreign minister's decision to visit Maldives and Sri Lanka on his first official tour after assuming the new portfolio in the Vajpayee government, is in itself a confidence-building measure to impress on the two neighbours the importance Delhi attaches to bilateral relations with them.

After finishing the first leg of his journey in Male, Sinha arrived in Sri Lanka yesterday and held wide-ranging discussions with the government in Colombo over the last two days.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga, Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe and foreign minister Tyrone Fernando were among the Sri Lankan leaders with whom Sinha discussed important regional and bilateral developments.

He also reiterated India's demand for extradition of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam chief V. Prabhakaran, according to PTI reports. Maintaining that there was no contradiction between backing the peace process

and persisting with its demand for Prabhakaran's extradition, Sinha said: "There is no contradiction... our position has been clearly stated from time to time. We have our laws to observe and there is a peace process here."

India's request for Prabhakaran's extradition, pending since 1995, to stand trial for the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, is seen as a latent factor that will determine the course of the peace initiative.

In a joint statement issued at the end of his visit, Sinha underlined India's commitment to unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka and to the "restoration of lasting peace through a peaceful, negotiated settlement that meets the just aspirations of all elements of Sri Lankan society". He also reaffirmed the country's full support to the measures taken by the Sri Lankan government to take the peace process forward.

The presence of pro-LTTE entities — like the MDMK — in the ruling National Democratic Alliance in India has been a source of worry for the Sri Lankan leadership.



Yashwant Sinha with Chandrika Kumaratunga on Friday. (Reuters)

1 JUL 2002

THE TELEGRAPH

THURSDAY, JULY 11, 2002

10-10
11/7
GOODWILL AT ANY COST? *S. Lanka*

GIVEN THE TRAUMATIC experience this country has had with the LTTE, India would have to adopt a proactive strategy of pressing Sri Lanka to extradite the terrorist leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Velupillai Prabhakaran the main accused in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. However, New Delhi is clearly hesitant to emphasise India's own national interest in this regard for the fear of losing the goodwill of a neighbour like Sri Lanka. Regrettably, there is nothing in the latest briefings by top Indian officials to indicate that the new External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, will forcefully demand Mr. Prabhakaran's extradition at this point. Mr. Sinha's goodwill visit to Colombo, beginning today, seems designed, instead, to sustain the momentum that the bilateral exchanges gained in recent months. The Indo-Sri Lankan interactions remain on a positive trajectory but entirely without any definitive political underpinning. The danger, therefore, is that New Delhi might be unwittingly paving the way for good neighbourliness at any cost as regards Sri Lanka. Undeniably important in this context is the political and economic impetus that should be imparted to India's friendship with Sri Lanka. Yet, what cannot simply be missed is the stark calculus of the adversarial relationship which New Delhi has drawn up for its dealings with Pakistan. Significantly, this contrast is derived from New Delhi's double standard as regards different aspects of anti-India terrorism that have emanated, unrelated to one another, from the territories of two proximate neighbours — Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Overall, New Delhi does seem oblivious to or unconcerned about this harsh ground reality. New Delhi's persistent hesitancy over the Prabhakaran issue, whatever be the considerations, will deeply undermine the credibility of India's diplomatic campaign that Pakistan should extradite 20 identified terrorists and criminals.

It hardly requires to be underlined that Mr. Prabhakaran, a proclaimed offender in the case relating to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, cannot also be allowed to stay free from the long

arm of the law on any political account, however weighty that might appear to be in misguided calculations. It is a different matter, though, that Colombo, which at long last seems able to track the separatist LTTE leader, is eager to domesticate him and draw him into a political settlement under Norway's auspices as an accredited "facilitator" and a virtual mediator. On a separate but related plane, Norway too is willing to confer a certain degree of political legitimacy on Mr. Prabhakaran, although the diplomatic reasons that guide Oslo in this connection have remained far from fully explained. Given New Delhi's present attitude, it is Mr. Prabhakaran who must be laughing up his sleeve. Politically inexplicable is the aberrant convergence of the LTTE-soft policies by Colombo as also Oslo and New Delhi at present.

Mr. Sinha will be wasting a diplomatic opportunity in Colombo if he were to simply reassure Sri Lanka about India's current determination to stay politically neutral in respect of the ongoing "peace process" in the island-republic. It is morally reprehensible that New Delhi should unthinkingly endorse Colombo's bid to strike a peace deal with a proven terrorist leader. Although Colombo has set its heart on a negotiating process (as distinct from a military solution) to deal with the legitimate grievances of Sri Lanka's minority population of Tamils, the process itself does not provide for ways to bring the LTTE leader to justice for his heinous crimes inside Sri Lanka and also in India. It is appalling in these circumstances that an Indian politician, Vaiko, should have sung the LTTE's praise. By adopting an ambivalent stand on his infraction of India's new anti-terror law, New Delhi has only compounded the contradictions in its Sri Lanka policy. Given the LTTE's terrorist record in both India and Sri Lanka, New Delhi should not only review its political neutrality concerning Colombo's current "peace process" but also take a bold stand, rooted in principles, on the moral and legal implications of any support for the LTTE from any quarter within India itself.

1 1 JUL 2002

Vaiko dares Jaya to act against him

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Tamil Nadu chief minister J. Jayalalithaa's threat on Tuesday to arrest MDMK chief Vaiko under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (Pota) for supporting the LTTE gives a clear signal to the LTTE, its supporters in India and the Sri Lankan government that she will not



Jayalalithaa



Vaiko

allow militancy to continue.

In a letter to deputy prime minister L.K. Advani, Ms Jayalalithaa said: "We have no option but to proceed against the individual both under Pota and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, and to arrest the individual who has blatantly spoken in support of the terrorist outfit in total disregard and defiance of the laws of the land."

Mr Vaiko, in a statement faxed from Chicago on Wednesday, challenged Ms Jayalalithaa to take action against him, saying that he

and his party would not be cowed down by such threats.

"My party has never indulged in violence. The state government will never succeed in its efforts to threaten the MDMK with Pota," he said in his statement in Tamil, adding that he had earlier been arrested under far more draconian laws like Misa and gone to jail at least 23 times. Threats under Pota would not break his party.

Quoting Mr Vaiko in a speech he had delivered at a public meeting in Thirumangalam near Madurai on June 29, Ms Jayalalithaa in her Tuesday night letter to Mr Advani pointed out that his speech "undoubtedly attracts the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 as also Pota".

(The section of Mr Vaiko's speech she quoted: "Yesterday I supported the LTTE. Even today I am supporting the LTTE. Even tomorrow I will continue to support the LTTE. I am not afraid of Pota. I have faced even more draconian laws than Pota.")

Mr Vaiko said that he would cut short his visit to the US by two days and return on July 12. He had left for the US on June 30. Ms Jayalalithaa's threat came two days later.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

4 JUL 2002

THURSDAY, JUNE 13, 2002

119-10 ✓
NEW LINKS BUT OLD SHADOWS ✓
India - S. Lanka 13/6

THE STRATEGIC VALUE of a new economic bond seems to have been recognised by India and Sri Lanka as they try to push their relationship to a qualitatively higher pitch at this sensitive moment in bilateral interactions. While the initiative for such a new strategic dividend has come from Sri Lanka, India seems to have found it sensible to reciprocate with enthusiasm. The latest visit to India by the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, has helped generate ideas about prospective economic linkages that might well redefine the bilateral ambience for the future. However, the two neighbours will at present remain locked in a political equation that centres on Sri Lanka's quest for a final settlement of its internal ethnic conflict that often bristles with the overtones of a civil war. Relevant to the current Sri Lankan peace process, which is being "facilitated" by Norway, is New Delhi's willingness to encourage Colombo to negotiate with the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Now, even as New Delhi and Colombo seek to reinvent their economic relationship in this new context, the old shadows will remain as long as the LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, stays a fugitive from the due process of law and justice concerning the assassination of the former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. While there is no question that New Delhi should not resile from its demand for the extradition of Prabhakaran in this regard, the real test of statesmanship is how well India and Sri Lanka can resolve the issue in a manner that could improve and not diminish their growing entente.

Of all the building blocks that India and Sri Lanka seem to have mobilised for a new economic relationship, the most striking one is the move to expand the existing free trade agreement. At a different level, which requires sensitive bilateral cooperation, lies Colombo's decision to move forward and let the Indian Oil Corporation distribute petroleum products in Sri Lanka and operate the

oil tank network at Trincomalee. The area itself lies at the perimeter of the theatre of a prolonged confrontation between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan military forces. Arguably, this aspect should not be a major constraint at this time of moves by Colombo and the LTTE to settle their many disputes. India's technical capabilities are also beyond the pale of any doubts whatsoever. Yet, the real political issue at stake as regards this project has much to do with Sri Lanka's natural inclination for a degree of strategic autonomy on matters concerning its mammoth neighbour. It is against this psychological backdrop that Mr. Wickremesinghe is now eager to engage India in ways that could seem extremely beneficial to the Sri Lankans themselves. Definable, too, in these terms is the latest bilateral agreement to study the feasibility of the Sri Lankan proposal for a bridge between the two countries.

Mr. Wickremesinghe's latest visit to India, the second such diplomatic exercise in recent months, has certainly given currency to a new idiom in the bilateral sphere — economic integration. In a sense, the idea of a mutually reinforcing economic diplomacy from either side is not really new. It dates back to the time when sub-regional economic linkages were first visualised within the larger South Asian forum. For New Delhi, the success of any such project involving Sri Lanka can serve as a testament to India's good neighbourliness in a volatile region. Sri Lanka, on the other hand, seems to have calculated that the beneficial effects of a new economic linkage with India might enhance the level of political confidence in each other over time. However in the long run the political durability of the India-Sri Lanka entente will depend on how issues such as Mr. Prabhakaran's terrorist culpability are addressed by both sides. A complete clarification of Norway's willingness to promote Colombo's dialogue with a terrorist organisation may also help.

THE HINDU

13 JUN 2002

Delhi, Colombo to firm up economic ties

By C. Raja Mohan 2/16

NEW DELHI, JUNE 11. India today extended strong support to the unfolding peace process in Sri Lanka and backed Colombo's new vision for an accelerated economic integration between the two nations.

The Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe's talks with the Indian leaders here over the last two days, informed sources say, have helped "deepen the levels of mutual political confidence and open up new vistas of economic cooperation".

Mr. Wickremesinghe, who headed home this evening via Chennai, has left a positive impression on his Indian hosts. His regime, the Indian side believes, is imbued with a sense of purpose and a determination to move forward in a wide range of areas. Besides boldly seeking an end to the long and debilitating civil war with the Tamil minority, he appears keen on delivering a peace dividend to his nation at the earliest by enmeshing its economy with that of India.

The talks between Mr. Wickremesinghe and the Indian leaders, according to sources, "were relaxed and forward-looking". A joint statement issued after the talks said Mr. Wickremesinghe "apprised the Indian leadership of the cur-



The Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe, with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, in New Delhi on Tuesday. — Photo: V. Sudershan

rent status" of the peace process and that New Delhi "remains fully supportive".

But analysts here say the "moment of reckoning" for New Delhi and Colombo on the vexing issues surrounding the extradition of Velupillai Prabhakaran, leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, is "yet to come". For Colombo, a political

accommodation with Mr. Prabhakaran is the key to ending the extended conflict with the Tamil minority. In India the LTTE is a banned organisation and Mr. Prabhakaran is wanted in Indian courts in relation to the assassination of the former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, in May 1991.

While New Delhi continues

to hold on to the legal positions on LTTE and Mr. Prabhakaran, it does not want to flaunt them aggressively and obstruct the incipient peace process between Colombo and the LTTE.

There is hope, however, that with increasing levels of mutual trust and confidence New Delhi and Colombo will find a way to manage the political challenges in relation to the LTTE and its supremo.

India has begun to demonstrate a new flexibility on the various proposals from Sri Lanka to deepen bilateral economic integration and widen the ambit of the free trade regime between the two nations. A meeting between the officials of the Commerce Ministries of the two countries early next month is expected to resolve most of the outstanding procedural issues on the trade front. India also agreed to soften the terms of the \$100 million credit it had extended to Sri Lanka some time ago. The two sides noted with satisfaction the recent agreements that allow the Indian Oil Corporation to distribute petroleum products in Sri Lanka and operate the oil tankages at the Trincomalee port.

Of special interest is the agreement to initiate a feasibility study on a proposed land-bridge to connect southern Tamil Nadu with northern Sri Lanka.

India has not stopped us from talking to the LTTE: Ranil ^{9/6}

By Nirupama Subramanian

Handwritten: Hindu, S. Lanka, 11

COLOMBO, JUNE 8. Ever since assuming office last December, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, **Ranil Wickremesinghe**, has made it clear that India is vital to his policies, both for the country's ongoing peace process and for the development of its economy. On Sunday, Mr. Wickremesinghe begins a three-day official visit to India. Prior to his departure, he spoke exclusively to *The Hindu* on a range of issues. Following are excerpts from the interview:

Nirupama Subramanian: Prime Minister, you are going to India within six months of your last visit. What takes you there at this point?

Ranil Wickremesinghe: I had told Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee that I would brief him again on the situation in Sri Lanka when we had finished implementing the ceasefire agreement provisions after three months, and before talks started. Since I planned to visit Bangalore, this was a good opportunity to visit Delhi and meet him.

You are in the midst of a peace process with the LTTE. How do you see India's views on the LTTE and the status of its leader as a wanted man in India impacting on your peace process?

That has always been there. At the same time, the Indian Government and political parties have encouraged the peace process in Sri Lanka. It is for us to make headway first in Sri Lanka. India has already given us its support.

But don't you think the two are contradictory: on the one hand, encouraging your peace process with the LTTE, on the other, not relenting on the LTTE or Prabakaran?

If they encourage the peace process, India is encouraging a process that involves talking to the LTTE. But the reality of Indian politics is that the LTTE has been a subject of litigation in their courts, and the question of extradition of Prabakaran keeps coming up. In politics, there is always an element of contradiction.

But all this is on the basis of the present situation. Let us see what happens when we make progress. India has not told us not to make progress, not told us not to talk to the LTTE. And I think, when we make progress, we will find that India will not discourage us.

There is also the domestic political scene, parties take up their positions for domestic reasons.

Do you think India will be supportive of your proposal for an interim administration in the north-east run by the LTTE?

The idea of the interim administration has been around for a long time and India has accepted the fact that there has to be an interim administration. The composition of the interim administration is a matter for the Sri Lankan Government to discuss with Sri Lankan political parties and the LTTE.

INTERVIEW

In fact, the interim administration is going to be one of the major items on the agenda for talks with the LTTE.

The LTTE has expressed concern at your statement in the European Parliament that you want to link discussions on the interim administration with core political issues.

I don't think I used the word "core political issues", but while the interim administration will be the main item for discussion on the agenda, other issues will crop up during discussions.

It does seem as if the LTTE is dragging its feet on talks by not giving you firm dates yet. You were saying peace talks at the end of June, first it was supposed to be mid-May, now it may not be before July...

I don't think we should pass judgment on such issues. Let the Norwegians come back to us.

They are hoping it will be in July, and have asked us to keep ourselves available. We are ready to come in whenever it begins.

How about the LTTE demand for

lifting the ban on it before the commencement of talks?

Once the date for the talks is announced, we can lift the ban, may be 10 days before.

Your strategy seems to be to put pressure on the LTTE to agree to a date for talks by holding out the reward of deproscription.

I think for the first time, we have built up a consensus in the country in favour of deproscription. We have to build on that. In any case, we have to fix dates for the talks first, I think. That seems to be the most sensible way to do it. As someone said, I have to sell this to the south.

The LTTE has said the peace process is at an impasse because you have not lifted the ban on it yet, and it has complained about the non-implementation of certain provisions in the ceasefire agreement. Would you agree with its assessment?

That view has not been conveyed to me through the facilitators. If I keep replying to what is there in the papers, this process would have broken down long ago.

The MoU (ceasefire agreement) has been implemented to the D+90 level (90 days from the start of the truce). All the issues raised by the LTTE are being looked at by the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission.

For the first time, you have got a big change in the life of the people not only in the north and east, but in the south as well. And the whole process is moving forward, it has not got stuck anywhere.

Coming back to India, one of your Ministers said recently that your Government's decision to lease the Trincomalee oil tanks to the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) would serve Sri Lanka's security interests. Is there a security dimension to this decision?

There are two reasons: why we decided to give it to IOC. One, Sri Lanka is removing the monopoly on oil distribution and since IOC was interested, it was good to have a source of oil nearby.

Second, the rupee fluctuates under the pressure of oil prices, so when we have Indian Oil or one or two others here, that burden will not be borne by the Government.

But there is speculation that this has been done to present LTTE with a fait accompli on Trincomalee, to establish the Government's hold over Trincomalee.

The lease to Indian Oil has to be looked at in the context of the overall Indo-Lanka relations. It is essential for the development of Trincomalee as a port, and under the Indo-Lanka agreement, we had a commitment to develop the oil tank farm jointly. This is meant to develop Trincomalee as an economic and a commercial base, not a military base. And the LTTE wants it.

How do you see the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa's stand on the LTTE and are you going to meet her during this visit?

Her stand is not new. I would like to meet her and brief her on what is happening on Sri Lanka. We are also going to discuss with the Indian Government the feasibility of the land bridge (between Thalaimannar and Rameswaram) and that affects Tamil Nadu.

There are many issues to talk to her about. I think I know her well enough to exchange views on any matter frankly and freely. I hope to meet her.

You are going to India again at a time of great tension between India and Pakistan. Do you see this affecting your own country in any way?

My trip to Delhi, and President Musharraf's visit here (scheduled for the end of July) were both fixed before any of this took place. As far as we are concerned, the reasons for the tensions that exist now are bilateral. But we are also mindful of the fact that the consequence of the conflict will not be restricted to the northern plains of the subcontinent, that we will all be affected. We would like to see the tensions reducing, but that has to be done by the two countries, they are both very close to us.

India, Sri Lanka to set up panel on free trade

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 7. India and Sri Lanka today agreed to set up a working group for including trade in services in the bilateral free trade agreement.

The issue was taken up at the first Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) meeting under the Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The Indian delegation was led by the Commerce and Industry Minister, Murasoli Maran, and the Sri Lankan delegation by the Commerce and Consumer Affairs Minister, Ravi Karunanayake.

According to an official release, both the Ministers agreed that trade in services had become "very important" in the present circumstances and there was a need to utilise the core competencies of both the countries specially in areas of trans-shipment, tourism and professional services to mutual advantage. Mr. Karunanayake said the meeting assumed much greater significance since it had been organised on the eve of the Sri Lankan Prime Minister's visit to India. However, he expressed concern over the yawning trade deficit, which Sri Lanka had with India and said efforts should be made to bridge this gap. He also said that much needed to be done by both sides to enhance bilateral trade and investment flows.

From the Indian side, various issues including allowing import of all types of Indian tea for home consumption in Sri Lanka and deeper preferential margins for export of bulk cement were raised. The Sri Lankan delegation raised issues regarding opening up of more ports for export of tea and garments under the Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ), deepening of concessions for export of garments and relaxing Rules of Origin criteria relating to greater access to Indian markets. It was agreed that these issues would be further examined by both sides and finalised at the official-level meeting next month in Colombo.

0 8 JUN 2002

THE HINDU

Surprise at Chandrika 'statement' on Kashmir

By Nirupama Subramanian

COLOMBO, MAY 16. Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry officials here have expressed surprise at the reported remarks by the Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, calling for third-party mediation in the India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir.

Ms. Kumaratunga has been reported by *The News* of Pakistan as having told journalists at the United Nations—where she was attending a special General Assembly session on children—that when the two sides to the dispute had failed to resolve the problem, it was time to call in a third party.

Officials here said that it was difficult to judge from the reported version what the President had actually said and that they were awaiting a transcript of her conversation with journalists where she had made the statement.

But if the remarks attributed to her were correct, then this would be the first time that Sri Lanka had expressly called for third-party involvement in the dispute, the officials said.

The former Foreign Minister,

Lakshman Kadirgamar, who is now her foreign policy adviser, said he was trying to contact Ms. Kumaratunga, now on a private visit to the U.K., for a clarification on the remarks attributed to her.

"I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the remarks because I was not there. But if the remarks have been made, then it is surprising because Sri Lanka has never called for third-party mediation in Kashmir. We have always maintained that it is for the two parties to resolve it between themselves," Mr. Kadirgamar told *The Hindu*.

The fact that there was a third-party facilitating the resolution of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka could not be a parallel for Kashmir, he added.

Sri Lanka's official line on Kashmir has always been cautiously neutral, backing neither the Indian or Pakistani positions on the dispute.

Steering clear of stating explicitly that it was a bilateral dispute, Sri Lankan pronouncements on the issue have called on both countries to work towards a quick resolution of the conflict in the interests of

peace and stability of the region.

Within SAARC, Sri Lanka has resisted Pakistan's efforts to bring the Kashmir dispute on the agenda, but members agreed at the 1997 Male summit on the principle of informal discussions "among the countries on political matters".

Ms. Kumaratunga was quoted as citing the example of Sri Lanka, which had invited Norway to facilitate talks between the Government and the LTTE to resolve the two decade-old ethnic conflicts in the island.

The newspaper reported that Ms. Kumaratunga declined to be a mediator in the India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir, and said that such a role should be given to someone outside the South Asian region.

Officials here said they were not aware of any shift in the policy on Kashmir by the United National Front Government, with which the President is in a tense co-habitation.

The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Tyronne Fernando, is on an official visit to the Maldives and was not available for comment.

THE HINDU

17 MAY 2002

Chandrika's blueprint to eliminate terrorism

H.D. - 11
2A/2
By Our Special Correspondent *Anand S. Kerkar*

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23. Herself a victim of an assassination attempt, the visiting Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, today unfolded before a rapt audience the blueprint for eliminating terrorism by striking at its core socio-economic roots.

Delivering the first Madhavrao Scindia memorial lecture here, Ms. Kurmaratunga made a simple but profound observation — terrorism cannot be tackled without addressing its causes. "The tactics of terror and murder cannot... and should certainly not be tolerated by any state or government. The strictest action should be taken efficiently and expeditiously, against all movements and individuals participating in or condoning terrorism as a political strategy. But the causes that have generated such movements must be addressed."

Ms. Kumratunga was speaking before a galaxy of political leaders, scholars, bureaucrats, academics and socialites. The audience included the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, the Minister of State for External Affairs, Omar Abdullah, and the late Madhavrao Scindia's sister and currently Minister of State for Small Scale Industries in the Vajpayee Government, Vasundhara Raje. The former Prime Minister, I.K. Gujral, presided over the function along with Madhavrao's widow, Madhavi Raje Scindia.

As Ms. Kumaratunga spoke, a collage of electronically-generated images of Madhavrao Scindia in varying moods — which towered the backdrop — appeared to acquire a life of its own.

The Sri Lankan President said the present thinking on terrorism could be divided into two schools of thought. One places the terrorist beyond the pale of civilised society and considers him anathema to civilisation and stigmatises him as a plain murderer. "The second school of thought encourages an in-depth study of, and a systematic approach to understand and eradicate the reasons of such upheavals. The rational political, social and economic aspirations of peoples which, when frustrated continuously, give rise to full blown terrorism of modern day must be sifted out of the process of terrorist actions and looked at separately."

The antidote to terrorism, according to Ms. Kumaratunga, lies in "building pluralistic nations based on social and economic equality and power sharing". Devolution of power, where power is shared extensively between the Central Government and regional authorities, without leading to dismemberment of the state, could be a way out. Ms. Kumaratunga said cultural diversity was a source of strength and need not exacerbate into conflict.

THE HINDU

India supports Lankan talks

NEW DELHI, April 24. — India today renewed its commitment to Sri Lanka's "territorial integrity" and "complete support" for the peace process. It, however, maintained that it would not be directly involved in the talks or mediate in any way.

The only official request India has received is a communication from the LTTE, requesting treatment for their ailing spokesman, Anton Balasingham, which the government would consider "sympathetically," Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee had said.

The Centre would also extend its ban on the LTTE, which comes up for renewal on 13 May (the ban applied for a two-year tenure and expiring on 12 May), officials indicated. This is despite possible de-proscription of the LTTE by the Sri Lankan government, to aid their participation in peace talks (facilitated by Norwegian mediators) scheduled to be held in Thailand in June. It is unclear if the LTTE issue was raised by either side when Sri Lankan President Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga was hosted for lunch by the Prime Minister today.

Among those present at the "restricted" lunch and parleys were home minister Mr LK Advani, foreign minister Mr Jaswant Singh, commerce minister Mr Murasoli Maran, principal secretary to the Prime Minister Mr Brajesh Mishra, foreign secretary Mrs Chokila Iyer and High Commissioner in Colombo Mr Gopal Krishna Gandhi. Other than senior officials of the Sri Lankan High Commission here, Mrs Kumaratunga was accompanied by former foreign minister and now adviser, Mr Lakshman Kadirgamar.

Mrs Kumaratunga has urged caution in her government's talks with the LTTE. India has been in close contact with the Sri Lankan leadership and has been kept informed of the progress of the peace initiatives recently undertaken. — SNS

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THE STATESMAN

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RESPONDING TO THE LTTE

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IRRESPECTIVE OF WHAT shape they assume, it is patently clear that the LTTE hopes to use the negotiations with the Sri Lankan Government as an instrument to further its rehabilitation and parlay its legitimacy in the eyes of the international community in general and of India in particular. Not surprisingly, the LTTE chief, Velupillai Prabhakaran's press conference was scattered with remarks which expressed his organisation's desire to constructively engage New Delhi and replete with references to the shared cultural links between 'his' people and India, which he referred to as "our fatherland". Such overtures may be in keeping with the LTTE's manipulative gameplan, but are worthy of nothing but contemptuous disregard coming as they do from the head of an organisation which assassinated a former Prime Minister, which patronised Tamil extremist outfits in India and which encouraged a pernicious sense of chauvinism and sub-nationalism in Tamil Nadu. Against this background, New Delhi's reaction to Mr. Prabhakaran's press conference has been weak and insubstantial.

In the circumstances, it is not enough to merely reiterate that India will not get involved in the proposed peace talks between Colombo and the Tamil Tigers or simply to clarify, as the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, did recently, that New Delhi has no intention of lifting the ban on the LTTE. In the world of diplomacy and statecraft, reactions are not judged merely by the formal or substantive character but by the language they are couched in. Specifically, it is surprising that the cursory and disturbing manner in which Mr. Prabhakaran dismissed the Rajiv Gandhi assassination — as a "tragic incident" which occurred many years ago — evoked no response at all from the Prime Minister. The LTTE leader did not even attempt to deny his organisation's role in the assassination — an omission which could well be regarded as a tacit admission of its complicity. If

Mr. Vajpayee's reaction that New Delhi would sympathetically consider the LTTE request to have its ideologue, Anton Balasingham, medically treated in India was prompted by humanitarian considerations, the Prime Minister would do well to keep the LTTE's larger designs in mind. As the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, has pointed out, a number of other countries have the facilities to treat Mr. Balasingham's ailment. Moreover, many will be fully prepared to do so. In these circumstances, to accede to the LTTE request would send out exactly the kind of signal that the Tigers want — a gesture which they can interpret (and then proclaim) as evidence of New Delhi's accommodating or mellowing attitude. It was exactly this kind of calculation which, not so long ago, prompted the LTTE to test the waters by requesting that Tamil Nadu be used as a base for the organisation to conduct negotiations with the Sri Lankan Government.

A Government which is prepared to send its troops to the frontlines over Pakistan's reluctance to hand over 20 terrorists to India cannot enjoy any credibility if it is soft (or even ambivalent) towards a terrorist organisation which is headed by no less than the architect of the Rajiv Gandhi assassination. New Delhi's attitude to the LTTE has implications for Tamil Nadu, where a section of the polity, influenced by chauvinism and sub-nationalism, entertains a misplaced sympathy for the terrorist outfit. In contrast to Ms. Jayalalithaa's forthright stand, it is unfortunate that all that Prabhakaran's press conference evoked from the MDMK's Vaiko was a call for lifting the ban on the LTTE and a cryptic remark from the DMK's Karunanidhi welcoming the LTTE's acknowledgement of India as its fatherland. Given the country's past experience and the LTTE's track record, the only kind of relationship that India can have with the outfit is none at all. The Vajpayee Government should make this crystal clear in its utterances.

THE HINDU

No role for India in Lanka talks: PM

BANGKOK\COLOMBO: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Thursday ruled out any Indian role in the proposed peace talks between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE even as Ranil Wickremesinghe, the Prime Minister of the island nation, agreed with the Tamil Tigers that New Delhi should play a significant role.

"We are not going to be a part of any negotiations or interfere in any talks between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE," Mr Vajpayee said in his first reaction to Tiger chief V. Prabhakaran's plea for an Indian role in the peace process.

He also rejected Prabhakaran's request to lift the ban on his organisation

imposed after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. However, he said the government could sympathetically consider the request to extend medical assistance to ailing LTTE spokesperson Anton Balasingham in India.

But Mr Wickremesinghe said India did have a role to play. "How it will evolve I cannot say. The Norwegians will continue in their facilitation role," he said.

On Wednesday, Prabhakaran, appearing in public for the first time in 12 years, had called for India's "active sympathy and support" for the peace effort, saying they had "suffered a lot because of contradictions" between India and the group.

Welcoming Prabhakaran's commit-

ment to the Norwegian bid to end the country's protracted ethnic war, Mr Wickremesinghe said, "Yesterday (Wednesday) Prabhakaran said if there was internal self-determination, that could be accepted as an alternative to a separate state. It showed the LTTE is willing to work within the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka."

However, Mr Wickremesinghe, who earlier this year had hinted that the government would de-proscribe the LTTE, did not commit himself to the fresh LTTE demand. Sources said Mr Wickremesinghe was keen to ensure that the LTTE remained outlawed in five countries, including India and the U.S., even if the local ban was revoked. (Agencies)

Get Prabakaran extradited: Jayalalithaa

By Our Tamil Nadu Bureau

CHENNAI, APRIL 11. Reactions in Tamil Nadu to yesterday's press conference by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam chief, V. Prabakaran, were on expected lines with the Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, seeking his extradition, the DMK president, M. Karunanidhi, welcoming the LTTE's statement that India was its fatherland, and the MDMK general secretary suggesting that Sri Lanka now lift the ban on the outfit.

The strongest reaction came from the Chief Minister. Describing the LTTE as "deadlier" than the terrorist outfits operating against India from Pakistan, she said if Sri Lanka was unable to extradite Mr. Prabakaran, then it should seek the intervention of the Indian armed forces and bring him to India.

The Government of India, which wanted Pakistan to extradite 20 terrorists, should not adopt a different a yardstick to Prabakaran. She would write to the Prime Minister, A. B. Vajpayee, asking him to take steps to get the Government of Sri Lanka to extradite Prabakaran. India, she pointed out, had an extradition treaty with Sri Lanka.

"It is outrageous that a leader of a

terrorist organisation, who is responsible for the death of millions of people and who has been declared a proclaimed offender by an Indian special court, should be able to walk freely in a friendly country and be treated as a hero by the media," she told reporters at the Secretariat here.

Referring to Mr. Prabakaran's appeal not to "dig up the past", Ms. Jayalalithaa wondered: "How can we not dig up the past? He will have to pay for his crimes." None on Indian soil could forget the past actions of the LTTE.

Asked whether the LTTE ideologue, Anton Balasingham, should be allowed medical treatment in India on humanitarian grounds, she said there were other places where he could obtain it. The LTTE would not be allowed to set foot in Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Karunanidhi said it was impossible not to heave a sigh of relief at the efforts being taken by the democratic Sri Lankan Government to achieve lasting peace.

Condemning the 'casual manner' in which the LTTE leadership tried to brush aside the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the TNCC president, E. V. K. S. Elangovan, wanted Mr. Prabakaran to

surrender to India for the "dastardly crime".

Mr. Elangovan said after several years the LTTE chief had 'surfaced' to the full glare of media publicity. The Government of India must not hesitate anymore, but impress on Sri Lanka and if need be, other countries, the need for bringing him to justice in India.

The MDMK general secretary, Vaiko, described the media interaction as a "very significant development" and said it was "very easy to criticise the LTTE that they will not honour their words". But it should not be forgotten that the historic agreements between Tamils and Sinhalese reached in 1957 and 1965 were unilaterally thrown into the dustbin by the Sri Lankan Government. Also, the LTTE offered ceasefire from a position of strength. The ban on the LTTE in Sri Lanka should be lifted to enable a meaningful dialogue.

Mr. Vaiko, who condemned the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, said individual events should not decide the fate of the entire Tamil race.

India, a regional superpower, had a "vital role to play" and it was "in our geopolitical interest" to play such a role.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2002

INDIA AND THE LTTE

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THE AUDACIOUS MOVE by the terrorist-leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Velupillai Prabhakaran, to appear unhindered in the public domain at Killinochchi in Sri Lanka today has been made possible by a number of critical factors. While the outward reality has much to do with the new climate of a popular yearning for co-existence within the Sri Lankan milieu, the strange case of New Delhi's uncritical and silent view of the unfolding events in that country is inexplicable and perplexing. Indeed, the Vajpayee administration has much to answer for having clearly forsaken its manifest duty, failing to seek the extradition or deportation of Mr. Prabhakaran in these surreal yet novel circumstances. It hardly requires to be underlined that the LTTE leader is a proclaimed offender in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. New Delhi's indefensible failure to initiate any diplomatic action in regard to Mr. Prabhakaran in the present context is compounded by some glaring inconsistencies in the Vajpayee administration's foreign policy towards India's close neighbours. The total absence of any concern on New Delhi's part to secure Mr. Prabhakaran's extradition is only magnified by the insistent manner in which official India demands that Pakistan extradite or deport 20 terrorists and criminals who have been identified in a publicised list that was handed over to Islamabad some time ago.

A sensitive attempt to discern and expose the profound contradictions in New Delhi's thinking on these issues cannot be misconstrued as a careless exercise to devalue India's genuine concerns about cross-border terrorism that has emanated from Pakistani territory over time. The emphatic point really is that India's cause cannot be served well if the Vajpayee administration, for whatever reason, tends to differentiate between the LTTE leader, a known terrorist whose complicity in the murder of one of India's brightest leaders, Rajiv Gandhi, has deeply hurt the Indian psyche, and the suspects in the list of 20 — in particular, Masood Azhar who is accused of having masterminded the heinous terrorist crime against India's

Parliament on December 13. New Delhi's incomplete and partial response in addressing the seemingly comparable cases of criminal accountability raises a fundamental question whether the Vajpayee administration is pursuing a foreign policy more self-serving than on behalf of the national interest. Dissimilarities may certainly exist between India's historical estrangement with Pakistan, on one side, and New Delhi's relatively less troubled engagement with Colombo, on the other hand. However, there is no valid reason why New Delhi should take a soft line — either an unthinking indifference or indeed an irresponsible lapse — in regard to Mr. Prabhakaran at this stage.

The inexplicable silence of the Congress Party itself on Mr. Prabhakaran's current tactics does not absolve the Government of India of its diplomatic inaction insofar as his visibility is concerned. New Delhi cannot explain away its ineptitude of this magnitude on the ground of being openly helpful to the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, as he seeks to engage the separatist LTTE leader by every possible means including that of allowing him to carve out a political space for himself. In this situation, India has already done well to appreciate Mr. Wickremesinghe's vision of an immediate peace in Sri Lanka and of an eventual political solution to the endemic ethnic conflict there. This should not, however, prevent India from seeking to bring Mr. Prabhakaran to justice, whatever might be Colombo's perception of his relevance to the incipient Sri Lankan peace process as a man at liberty. Norway's decision to engage Mr. Prabhakaran so as to "facilitate" or mediate a dialogue between his organisation and Colombo, despite the present international revulsion against the politics of terrorism, cannot alter the abominable quality of the LTTE leader's anti-India actions. The recent effort by the LTTE to regain a foothold in India through the ruse of seeking a staging post for peace initiatives in Sri Lanka seems to have been rebuffed. There is no reason whatsoever why India should now be more benign towards the LTTE.

THE HINDU

Sri Lankan envoy for expansion of economic ties

India - Sri Lanka

By Our Special

Correspondent

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NEW DELHI, MARCH 11. The Sri Lankan High Commissioner in India, Senake Bandaranayke, today said that developing a specific and focussed relationship between the industrial communities of the two countries was the need of the hour.

Addressing a buyer-seller meeting with a visiting Sri Lankan delegation under the aegis of the CII, he said the concrete partnership between the two would be a part of the general expansion of the economic activities in both the countries. However, the focus on the actual relationship should be complementary rather than competitive.

While underlining that the small and medium enterprises form the backbone of a country's industrial infrastructure, he said the coming together of countries, however small, makes for economic synergies and economic growth can be achieved only in terms of everybody's interest.

Tracing the age-old historical relationship between India and Sri Lanka, Prof. Bandaranayake said that both the countries stand on the threshold of a globalised world economy and should take advantage of the Free Trade Area Agreement that exists between them for the expansion of their domestic markets and extension of their trade.

The Joint Secretary, Ministry of Small Scale Industry, Shankar Aggarwal, said a network has to be developed between India and Sri Lanka to improve access to technology and marketing of products in each other's territories.

The president, Sri Lankan Chamber of Small Industry, Aloy R. Jayawardene, said that his Government has thrown open the development and management of the country's infrastructure activities to the private sector by allowing them to control 51 per cent of the equity and retaining the rest.

Lanka PM warns pro-LTTE minister

PK Balachandran
Colombo, March 7

SRI LANKAN Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has ticked off his Indian Tamil cabinet colleague, P Chandrasekharan, for inviting the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to stage a "Tamil Upsurge" rally in the tea plantation areas of the country, which is home to about a million Tamils of Indian Origin (TIO).

Sources close to the Prime Minister told *Hindustan Times*, that Chandrasekharan was warned that he would lose his ministerial berth if he persisted with the plan to hold the controversial rally meant to highlight demands which the majority Sinhala community considers separatist.

The central highlands, where the tea plantations are located, are also bang in the middle of Sinhala country.

Chandrasekharan, who is Minister of Plantation Infrastructure, had told the "Tamil Upsurge" rally in Vavuniya on March 1 that it should be held in the central highlands because the 1.5 m Indian origin Tamils of Sri Lanka fully supported the LTTE's demand for self-determination and a separate homeland for the Sri Lankan Tamils. There was also a suggestion that such a rally should be held in the national capital, Colombo, where too there is a sizeable Indian Tamil population.

Prabhakaran asks Norway to open road to Jaffna

The Tamil Tiger supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran has "insisted" that Norway get the Sri Lankan Government to lift its military blockade at Eluthumadduval in Thenmarachchi so that



RANIL WICKREMESINGHE

the A9 highway between rebel-held Kilinochchi and government held Jaffna is opened, reports reaching here say.

The demand was made on Wednesday when Prabhakaran met Maj.Gen. Trond Furuhoide, the visiting Norwegian head of the Scandinavian mission established to monitor the Memorandum of Understanding between the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The meeting took place at a LTTE hideout in Kilinochchi.

The LTTE's chief negotiator Anton Balasingham had stated earlier that the rebel group would open the A9 beyond Kilinochchi only if the Government opened the road to Jaffna from Eluthumadduval, but the government had been reluctant to open the floodgates to Jaffna. However, informed sources told *Hindustan Times* today that given the current mood to give in to the LTTE, the barriers at Eluthumadduval might well be lifted.

LTTE prepares to move in

By Nirupama Subramanian

KOKADDICHOLAI (BATTICALOA), MARCH 5. In this village deep inside the LTTE-controlled territory, a group of people waited at the main LTTE office to see the area leader, Sivagnyanam Karikalan. Inside, Mr. Karikalan, dressed in a grey shirt and trousers, was in a lunch meeting with a team from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to discuss development projects for the area. Ever since the ceasefire, the 51-year-old political wing leader of the LTTE for Batticaloa and Ampara has been entertaining an unending stream of high-profile visitors, from the leader of the Indian plantation Tamils from central Sri Lanka and Cabinet Minister, Arumugam Thondaman, to foreign delegations. "The ADB official told me he had believed the LTTE to be a terrorist organisation, but that he had changed his mind about that after coming here," Mr. Karikalan told *The Hindu* later, clearly revealing in the respectability.

In the specially-constructed waiting area of the office, a distraught mother pleaded with a minor LTTE functionary to be allowed to see her 17-year-old son at least once. Her three other children were also LTTE cadres, and were killed in battle. "He is my only remaining child," she murmured in appeal, as the functionary moved away. She reasoned later that the LTTE could not have taken him away forcibly. "They know we are a heroes' family. My son must have gone by himself. I

will be happy if I can just have a glimpse of him, but they say they have sent him to a camp," she said.

Those who have refused to part with their children or money have been punished. People who fled the LTTE-controlled areas have been asked not to return, and their homes and paddy fields, if they had any, taken over. But Mr. Karikalan denied that there was forcible recruitment of children, or that the LTTE was extorting money. "The fear is being created artificially by those who are against the peace process," he told *The Hindu*, accusing Tamil militant groups who have been sidelined

AFTER THE TRUCE ACCORD—III

in the latest peace process of attempting to tarnish the LTTE's image by committing atrocities against the people in its name. He claimed that the LTTE recruited only "volunteers", and said it collected money from only those who were affluent enough to give, in order to maintain the strength of the organisation. "It is only because of the LTTE's strength and the realisation that we cannot be militarily defeated, that the Sinhala government has decided to talk peace with us now," he said. Mr. Karikalan said the LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, wanted to give the Wickremesinghe Government a chance to prove its sincerity. "But we have been cheated before, and we have to be prepared for any eventuality," he said.

Seeking to dispel the impression that he had differences with the top leadership of the organisation, Mr. Karikalan described the ceasefire agreement as "sacred" to all the LTTE cadres, because it had been signed by the leader himself.

Under the agreement, after 90 days, the LTTE cadres will be allowed into the government-controlled areas of northeast Sri Lanka for "political work". Mr. Karikalan said the LTTE would set up an office in Batticaloa town for this purpose. He said the activities would include collecting funds for the organisation and recruitment of volunteers. "Once we open our office in the town, people will get to know us better, and they will realise that we are not responsible for any of the activities that we are being blamed for now," he said. But there are concerns that once the LTTE becomes a legitimate force, it will begin a rapid takeover of the administration and civil affairs of the entire district.

There are signs of it already. Among those waiting to see Mr. Karikalan at his office was a teacher, who had been transferred to a school in an area not to his liking. "We have come to appeal against the transfer and to ask for a better posting," said the teacher's wife, who had come with him. Asked how the LTTE could help when it was the Government that had ordered the transfer, the wife replied: "We first appealed to the department. But they told us it is all in the hands of the Tigers, so we came here."

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